

Wednesday, February 18, 2015 - HB 455

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Helena Weaver (spell out your last name).

I am 19 years old and live in Kalispell, Montana with my grandparents. If it were not for their support, I would fall in the Medicaid coverage gap. Ever since I was little, I have been sick: colds, stomach issues, and bronchitis – like I have low immunity. When I was a junior in high school, I really started to have migraines. I was a cheerleader, a flyer, and I had a seizure while in the air. I only went to two days of my senior year because I was so sick.

I suffer from complicated migraines and seizures. My seizures are so severe that it has caused my heart to stop. I have Alice in Wonderland syndrome where the room gets distorted; I lose time, and feel outside my body. I have loose joints where my bones move and at some points I have woken up unable to move my legs.

I have seen neurologists, chiropractors, and physical therapists, changed my diet, done a sleep study, and tried homeopathic treatment. I have had an MRI and an EKG. Healthy Montana Kids paid for everything. Last summer, I lost HMK and I was uninsured, but after a couple ER visits and few thousand in medical bills, my grandparents purchased a plan for me on the Health Insurance Marketplace.

My grandparents are 75 and 76 years old. Without their support, I would fall in the Medicaid coverage gap. My grandmother has stage-four kidney disease. She is so worried because if something were to happen to them, I would be without coverage. Medicaid expansion would mean that I wouldn't have to rely on my grandparents.

I am petrified and every night before I go to bed; I say that I love her so many times. It is really scary because I know that she should be retired, traveling, and not working. My grandparents opened a business jut to earn extra money to help support me.

I would love to work, but I can't. Last summer, I worked at the Hilton as a housekeeper, but was having seizures in the bathrooms of the rooms I was cleaning. I have been turned down for disability because I had that time part time job.

If I wasn't sick, I would go to college and would be helping others. I want to be a child psychologist. I took the GED and enrolled in Flathead Valley Community College, but was too sick to make it through my first semester. I make Youtube videos about being sick. I have received so many letters from people who have watched my videos and are going through the same thing. It is easy to feel like a burden. Everyone is worrying about you and has to take care of you. I can't even drive or ride a bike. I have always loved doing things for myself.

Medicaid expansion would give me hope. It won't fix everything, but it would mean that my grandma wouldn't have to worry as much. It would mean that I could have hope to one-day feel normal again.

I urge a do not pass on HB 455.